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## **Introduction to Special Issue: Papers from ICAAL7**

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**Abstract:** This is a collection of 9 articles from the Seventh International Conference on Austroasiatic Linguistics held in 2017 in Kiel, Germany. The papers present significant advances in both diachronic and synchronic studies of Austroasiatic languages in Mainland Southeast Asia and Eastern India.

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## INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE: PAPERS FROM ICAAL 7

This special issue of the Journal of South-East Asian linguistics consists of a selection of papers from the 7th International Conference on Austro-Asiatic Linguistics, held in Kiel, Germany between September 29 - October 1, 2017 at the Christian Albrechts University (CAU). The conferences are held every two years and provide an opportunity for scholars working on Austroasiatic languages to present and discuss their work. At the business meeting a proceedings volume was proposed - these nine papers are the result of the proposal.

Austroasiatic languages are relatively diverse typologically and are located non-contiguously over a large geographical area stretching from eastern India to Vietnam. The relationship of the typological diversity with the geographical spread of the languages is a central issue that continued to arise at the conference. The degree of difference between various groups of languages (particularly the traditional distinction between “Munda” and “Mon-Khmer”) and exactly what motivates such differences has been much debated, and a number of papers in this volume address these questions, particularly in relation to the proposed history and spread of the languages.

The first paper in the volume tackles the differences between Austroasiatic languages in terms of prosody. In their paper “On prosodic structures in Austroasiatic diachrony: ‘Rhythmic holism’ revisited in light of preliminary acoustic studies”, Hiram Ring and Gregory D. S. Anderson provide a timely critique of the widely cited work of Donegan and Stampe (references in paper). They review some of the current cross-linguistic literature on prosody, as well as studies of Austroasiatic languages, and conduct a pilot acoustic analysis of words and phrases in Sora, Pnar, and Lawa. They suggest that claims of a single rhythmic organizing principle at the prosodic level accounting for the differences between the Munda languages and other Austroasiatic languages are difficult to maintain, and that the three languages investigated seem to share the same iambic structure at the word level. They also highlight how reference to and sharing of data is crucial to make progress in disentangling the historical relationships and development of these languages.

The second paper describes grammatical structures in Munda languages. The paper, by Gregory D. S. Anderson and Bikram Jora titled “Negation, TAM and person-indexing interdependencies in the Munda languages: a preliminary report”, offers a careful analysis of interacting Munda grammatical systems, namely negation, tense/aspect/mood, and person-indexing. They suggest that alignment of various elements of these systems may allow for reconstruction, and refer to a database of transcriptions and translations, providing a large number of examples to back up their claims.

The third paper, by Jurica Polančec, also has Munda languages as its focus. Titled “Correlative-Relative Clauses In Munda Languages: An Overview”, it highlights how Munda languages have both headed and headless Correlative-Relative Clauses, and that while the former are likely borrowed from neighboring Indo-Aryan languages, the latter are likely original to Munda. Evidence provided comes from neighboring languages and an appeal to cross-linguistic tendencies.

The fourth and fifth paper in this issue move east from South Asia to the Palaungic languages in eastern Myanmar. With “A phonological analysis of Riang Lang” Ellie Hall adds new data to the discussion of phonemes in Riang Lang, a Palaungic language located in Shan State, Myanmar. Her analysis indicates that the language has 12 vowels and 21 consonants, which differs slightly from previous analyses.

Rachel Weymuth’s paper “Verbal affixes in Rumai, Palaung” provides an initial account of verb morphology in another Palaungic language, Rumai, spoken in northern Shan State of Myanmar and in neighboring Yunnan, China. She finds that the affixes that can be grouped into aspectual, modal, and polarity domains, as well as a single reciprocal marker. For some of the morphemes a source can be identified, while for others it cannot.

The next two papers shift the focus slightly from descriptive accounts to historical. In “Proto-Nicobarese phonology” Paul Sidwell gives a reconstruction of the parent of the Nicobarese languages, notable for being the only Austroasiatic languages currently located on islands. While relatively little data exists for these languages, he scours what sources exist in order to present initial results of his ongoing reconstruction, providing an appendix of forms and links to an online dataset.

The seventh paper, “Katuic presyllables and derivational morphology in diachronic perspective” by Ryan Gehrman is also a reconstruction, but of a different type. In this paper evidence is shown for the existence of presyllables, affixes, and morphological processes in Proto-Katuic. Each of these elements are carefully reconstructed based on data from the modern Katuic languages located in southern Laos, central Vietnam, northeastern Thailand and north-central Cambodia.

The eighth paper in this issue, “The Integration of French loanwords into Vietnamese: A corpus-based analysis of tonal, syllabic and segmental aspects” by Vera Scholvin and Judith Meinschaefer, deals with lexical borrowing in the largest Austroasiatic language, Vietnamese. Through analysis of a corpus of data made available online, the authors identify how words from French have been borrowed into the phonological system of Vietnamese with no influence from French phonology.

The ninth and final paper is somewhat more speculative. In “Waterworld: Lexical evidence for aquatic subsistence strategies in Austroasiatic”, Roger Blench gives an anthropological perspective on the groups that speak Austroasiatic languages, highlighting the diverse nature of cultural and linguistic overlaps in the region. We are reminded of the difficulties inherent in separating out older core vocabulary from borrowings at multiple historical strata and linking this with the dating of cultural patterns, particular flora/fauna, and relics, a problem that has plagued research in the area for centuries. He uses existing, publicly accessible databases of lexical data from different languages and families in the South-East Asian area to suggest potential subsistence strategies and movement patterns of Austroasiatic people groups, along with possible fauna of the areas they inhabited.

This introduction would not be complete without acknowledging the work that went into it. As all editors know, receiving and managing multiple papers, interfacing with authors and reviewers, is not an easy task, though it has its rewards. We commend each of the authors for their timely submission and thank them for the rapid revisions that have allowed for a relatively quick publication of this special issue. Each of the papers were reviewed by two separate anonymous reviewers, and we wish to thank each of these reviewers for their insightful critiques. Throughout the process we received invaluable assistance and advice from Mark Alves, the JSEALS managing editor. Other important sources of advice were Paul Sidwell and Mathias Jenny.

In conclusion, we feel it is important to note that this ICAAL proceedings follows the Mon-Khmer Studies Journal's special issue (43) in 2014, which contained papers from ICAAL 5. The MKS issue, in turn, was preceded only by the ICAAL 4 proceedings in 2011 and an Oceanic Linguistics special publication in 1976, which makes the current issue the fourth published ICAAL proceedings since the inception of the conference in 1973 at the University of Hawai'i. With this special issue we return full circle to publication under the University of Hawai'i Press, and are extremely excited to be part of a new wave of Austroasiatic studies. There is much work yet to be done on these languages with all their diversity and complexity, but given the multiple perspectives and insights represented by the authors in this volume, and the increasing focus by AA researchers on making underlying data accessible, the outlook for AA studies in the coming century is incredibly positive.

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